

ROMANS 15:1-13

NOVEMBER 28, 2021



INTRODUCTION

What is the hardest thing you have ever had to do? What would have been the best encouragement someone could have given you in that situation?

Who do you know that is going through a hard time right now and could use some encouragement? What keeps you from noticing the needs of other people, especially this time of year?

We all know deep down that getting the presents we want isn't really what Christmas is all about. But we still tend to think in those terms more than we should, thinking about ourselves more often than others. In the passage we'll study today, Paul urged Christians to consider others' needs above their own. We'll see how God wants to use that change in attitude to bring redemption in Jesus Christ to all kinds of people and graft them into His family.

DISCUSSION

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 15:1-13.

Why do you think Paul addressed those who were strong? Why did he include himself?

Why are you more likely to put others first if you're focusing on God?

What does it mean to bear the weaknesses of other people? How can you do that?

What two purposes of the Messiah's ministry did Paul identify in verses 8 and 9?

What examples do you recall of Jesus serving others? How does Jesus's example help you show genuine concern for others?

Why do we need endurance and encouragement to live in harmony with other Christians? Where do we get that endurance and encouragement?

How can believers have a united mind and voice when personalities and preferences are so different?

Why should the focus of the church be to glorify God? What are some guidelines that can help us stay unified and focused on glorifying God?

GOING DEEPER

Read John 13:34-35. How might thinking deeply on what Christ has done for us cause us to truly love others?

APPLICATION

Why is it important for us to consider why we need to think of others and get along at this time of year?

Is Summit Students a group where anyone can feel welcome and part of the group? How can we grow in that way this Christmas season?

What is the ultimate purpose of our being unified and living in harmony?

PRAYER

Praise God for being the Savior of all people. Ask God to help you think of others instead of yourself, and to give you opportunities to demonstrate love to them so that they might find the grace and peace of the gospel of Jesus this Christmas season.

COMMENTARY

ROMANS 15:1-13

15:1-2. The literal meaning of verb rendered bear is “take up.” It can also mean “to put up with.” Here, the apostle called on mature believers to go beyond toleration of weak member’s attitudes and beliefs to a self-sacrificing commitment to take up their burdens. Paul was urging the mature to be proactive in responding with patience, love, and sacrifice in ways that would help other Christians move beyond their weaknesses to a mature faith (see Gal. 6:1-2).

15:3. Paul pointed to Christ as the ultimate example of One who did not set out to please Himself, but was willing to put up with biting insults and criticisms. Paul drew from Psalm 69:9 to demonstrate that Jesus had borne insults that ultimately were aimed at God the Father. Similarly, the apostle made it clear that the ministry of stronger believers on behalf of weaker Christians would often go unappreciated by those being helped.

15:4. Paul reminded believers with robust faith that the Scriptures were written for their instruction, their hope, their endurance, and their encouragement. These four ministries of the Scriptures provided help for weaker Christians as well as stronger believers. By studying the examples of past people of God—some who showed strong faith; others who displayed weak faith—all Christians can gain practical instruction, encouragement, and endurance.

15:5-6. Paul knew that it was the God of the Scriptures who sustains the believer. The Scriptures are powerful because they are the words of the living God. Paul longed for Christians everywhere to live in harmony with one another. All Christians could live in harmony if they kept before them life's ultimate purpose: to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul urged his readers never to forget that they were one body in Christ, designed individually and collectively to be a tribute to God.

15:7-13. Had not Christ taken on the form of a servant and gone first to the “lost sheep of Israel” (Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Rom. 1:16) in confirmation of the promises made to the patriarchs, the unfolding of the mercy of God to the Gentiles would not have occurred as we know it.

Paul cites four Old Testament passages (2 Samuel 22:50, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, Isaiah 11:10) illustrating that it was always God's intent for the Gentiles to be brought into the fold of God's love and mercy. This became possible when Christ came as the Jewish Messiah (came as a servant of the Jews) and died for the sins not only of Israel but of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Thus Christ's servanthood provided the means whereby both Jews and Gentiles were unified in one body—Paul's goal for the church in Rome.

Paul uses all of these verses to demonstrate that the Gentiles were not an afterthought in God's plan, but were destined to inherit salvation through the instrumentality of Israel and her Messiah. In light of God's plan from the beginning to bring Jews and Gentiles together to share in his blessings (Gen. 12:3), disunity and contention among believers in a given assembly is unacceptable.

Joy and peace are supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and any hope they have of learning to love those of a different racial and ethnic background than themselves can only come through him. Hope for the present and hope for the future will only overflow in the believer as the believer overflows with the Spirit.